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Steps to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East

Report submitted by China

China has always followed closely the development of the situation in the Middle East, attached importance to advancing the Middle East peace process, and actively supported the efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. In accordance with provisions of the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, China has taken the following steps to advance the Middle East peace process and to promote the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East:

1. China supports and is committed to bilateral and multilateral efforts to advancing the Middle East peace process.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China continuously pays close attention to developments in the Middle East and works vigorously to facilitate and promote the peace process in that region. Through many different bilateral and multilateral channels, China continues to advocate peace talks, urging Israel and Palestine to resolve their territorial disputes through political negotiations. By so doing, China has played a unique role in facilitating the Middle East peace process.

(1) Working bilaterally with Arab countries and Israel

Over the past two years, the Chinese Government has maintained close bilateral relations with countries in the Middle East, actively engaged in bilateral exchanges, and urged Palestine and Israel to establish mutual trust and to reopen peace negotiations.

As the situation in the Middle East has developed, President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and other Chinese leaders have responded to the concerns of countries in the region and expressed China's position on the Middle East peace process through correspondence with regional leaders. China has also conducted high-level visits to countries concerned. In April 2006, State Councillor Hua

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Jianmin visited Egypt. In June 2006, Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to Egypt. In May 2005, the Chairman of the Palestine National Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, paid a state visit to China. In December 2005, the King of Jordan, Abdullah II bin Al Hussein, made an official visit to China. In July 2006, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of Israel, Tzachi Hanegbi, met with the Chinese Foreign Minister in Beijing. In November 2006, the President of Egypt, Mohammed Hosni Mubarak, paid a state visit to China. In January 2007, the Prime Minister of Israel, Ehud Olmert, visited China.

Government exchanges at various levels were also frequently held between China and the Middle Eastern countries concerned. In June 2005, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing visited Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon, and provided US$ 1 million cash remittance and construction materials worth 10 million yuan renminbi to Palestine. In July 2005, Ahmad Mohammad Ahmad, member of the central committee of the Syrian National Progressive Front and secretary-general of the Arab Socialist Movement, made a visit to China. In August 2005, Wang Jiarui, Minister of the International Liaison Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, visited Israel and Palestine. In September 2005, Abbas Zaki, Delegate-General of the Foreign Relations Commission of the Fatah Movement visited China. In March 2006, Minister Wang Jiarui visited Lebanon. In May 2006, Walid al-Moualem, the foreign minister of Syria, paid an official visit to China. In December 2006, Abulaiti Abudurexiti, the Vice-Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, led a delegation to visit Syria. Also in December 2006, Assistant Foreign Minister Zhai Jun visited Israel, Palestine and Syria.

In addition, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing has made many telephone calls to the leaders or foreign ministers of countries in the Middle East to exchange views on the Middle East issue. The Chinese Foreign Ministry has also held political consultations with Syria and Israel respectively, emphasizing that steadily advancing the Middle East peace process through peaceful negotiations was the most fundamental and effective way to resolve the Middle East issue.

(2) Promoting peace talks in multilateral situations

In June 2005, the Second Senior Officials' Meeting of the Sino-Arab Cooperation Forum was held in Beijing. In May 2006, the second Ministerial conference and the Third Senior Officials' Meeting took place in Beijing. At these meetings, China worked with parties concerned to promote the Middle East peace process.

In 2005 and 2006, during the sixtieth and sixty-first United Nations General Assemblies, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing met with the representatives of Israel, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, and also attended the Ministerial Meeting of the Security Council on the issue of the Middle East.

In May 2007, Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi attended the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) conference held in Egypt, and submitted four suggestions on implementing the compact. During the conference he also exchanged views with many other prominent delegates.

Furthermore, China also worked with countries concerned to promote the Middle East peace process during the Sino-Africa Summit held in Beijing in 2006.

(3) Actively participating in international efforts to promote the Middle East peace process through mediation by China's special envoy on the Middle East issue

In June 2006, China's special envoy on the Middle East issue Sun Bigan visited Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, and exchanged views on the regional situation in the Middle East. In August, the special envoy visited Syria, Jordan, Israel, Palestine, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, focused on mediating the Israel-Lebanon Conflict.

In August 2006, the special envoy participated at the ministerial level in the Conference for Lebanon's Early Recovery and the International Donor Conference on the Humanitarian Situation in the Palestinian Territories, held in Stockholm, where he announced that China would provide 20 million yuan renminbi in humanitarian assistance to the Lebanese Government. In January 2007, the special envoy attended the International Conference on Aid to Lebanon, held in Paris, France, and again offered 50 million yuan renminbi in free assistance grants to Lebanon. In April 2007, the special envoy visited Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Israel and the European Union, discussing the situation between Palestine and Israel and in the Middle East.

(4) Using media spokespersons and other means to expound China's position, and advocate the peaceful resolution of the Middle East question

The Chinese Foreign Ministry follows closely developments in the Middle East, and expounds China's views and position on the situation through press releases by the spokespersons of the Ministry.

In October 2005, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing conducted written interviews with reporters for the Egyptian newspaper Al-Ahram and October magazine.

(5) Providing platforms for dialogue among Palestine and Israeli peace advocates

In December 2006, the Chinese Foreign Ministry held the Israel-Palestine Seminar on the Peace Process in the Middle East. Peace advocates from Israel and Palestine discussed how to ease the tense Middle East situation as well as how to advance the Middle East peace process, and issued a joint statement after the seminar.

2. China supports efforts towards establishing the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone.

China has been unconditionally committed to the non-use or threat to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon countries or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and has always supported the efforts of countries in various regions to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones on a basis of voluntary consultation. In its statement upon accession to the NPT in 1992, China made a solemn appeal that "nuclear-weapon states undertake to support proposals to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, respect the status of such zones and undertake corresponding obligations".

China holds that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is conducive to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime. Proliferation of nuclear weapons would be more dangerous in regions where tensions are high. For this reason, China has

unequivocally supported the Middle East countries in their efforts to establish the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone from the very start, believing that it would contribute to easing tension in the region and facilitating the settlement of the Middle East question. In the current situation, the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone is of the greatest importance.

China has been supporting efforts to establish the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone within the framework of the United Nations. Every year since 1974, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the resolution sponsored by Egypt on the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. Egyptian President Mubarak has also put forth an initiative to establish a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone and appealed to all countries in the Middle East to make vigorous efforts and conduct serious negotiations to this end. China has consistently supported those resolutions and the initiative. China also supports the resolution on the Middle East issue adopted by the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

China has actively promoted the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone at the bilateral level. In high-level meetings with leaders of Middle Eastern countries, China has expressed its appreciation of their efforts towards establishing the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and maintained its clear-cut position on supporting the establishment of such a zone.

In December 2003, Libya decided to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programmes, which included a nuclear-weapons programme. China welcomes this decision, believing that it would contribute to upholding the international non-proliferation regime as well as promote peace and stability in the region.

China believes that Israel should accede to the NPT and place all of its nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards. Countries in the Middle East should ratify the IAEA safeguards agreement and the Additional Protocol as soon as possible. All these would be of great significance for achieving the goal of promoting the universality of the NPT and reinforcing the international non-proliferation regime.

China has consistently maintained that the Iranian nuclear issue should be resolved in a peaceful manner through diplomatic negotiations. To this end, China calls on the parties concerned to enhance diplomatic efforts to resume negotiations as soon as possible and, through negotiations, to find a long-term, comprehensive and appropriate solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. China vigorously takes part in the international diplomatic efforts to promote the resumption of the negotiations. China will continue to play a constructive role in appropriately resolving the Iranian nuclear issue.

China is ready to work with the international community to make continued efforts for and contribute to the achievement of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East and the establishment of the Middle East Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone at an early date.